

Course Information



Intro to Buddhist Philosophy

RELS 2020-001

Fall 2025

Course Section Information

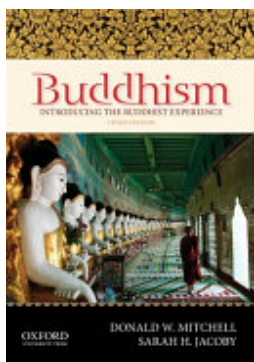
Days: Mondays and Wednesdays

Time: 1:00 - 2:20 PM

Campus: Taylorsville Campus

Classroom: AAB 223

Textbooks, Readings, and Course Materials



Authors: Donald W. Mitchell, Sarah H. Jacoby

Publication Date: 2013-01-01

Title: Buddhism

Subtitle: Introducing the Buddhist Experience

Edition: 3rd Edition

Publisher: OUP USA

Link: <https://a.co/d/0xJbKfJ>

ISBN: 9780199861873

For more information on textbook accessibility, contact Accessibility & Disability Services at ads@slcc.edu.

Course Student Learning Outcomes

- Analyze and interpret primary Buddhist philosophical and religious texts and practices, supplemented with secondary texts, demonstrating how they influence and are influenced by their cultural and historical contexts.
- Identify key figures and explain significant theories and traditions from Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and other Buddhist traditions.
- Analyze and evaluate Buddhist religious and philosophical issues such as the nature of reality, suffering (dukkha), impermanence (anicca), the not-self (anatman), the Middle Way, and karma, within Buddhist traditions, connecting these issues to modern philosophical and religious debates.
- Apply critical analysis, ethical reflection, and interpretive frameworks specific to Buddhist traditions to evaluate religious and philosophical concepts and issues.
- Communicate effectively in writing and class discussions about Buddhist philosophical and religious frameworks, articulating arguments and perspectives clearly and concisely.
- Reflect on, develop, and evaluate personal perspectives using insights from Buddhist traditions, aiming for intellectual growth, enabling respectful engagement and disagreement with those with different perspectives about substantive matters.

Assignment Schedule

Due Date	Assignment Name	Assignment Type	Points
	Roll Call Attendance	Assignment	100
9/7/25	Quiz #0: Syllabus and Plagiarism	Quiz	10
9/14/25	Quiz #1: The Buddha and His Indian Context & The Life of Gautama Buddha	Quiz	5

Due Date	Assignment Name	Assignment Type	Points
9/21/25	Quiz #2: The Teachings of the Buddha	Quiz	5
9/24/25	Handout & Grading Rubric for In-Class Essay #1: Empty Persons	Assignment	20
10/5/25	Quiz #3: Early Buddhism and the Way of the Elders	Quiz	5
10/12/25	Quiz #4: The Great Vehicle	Quiz	5
10/12/25	GE Signature Assignment 1: Pre-Visit Analysis	Assignment	85
10/19/25	Quiz #5: Indian Experiences of Buddhism	Quiz	5
10/22/25	Handout & Grading Rubric for In-Class Essay #2: Abhidharma and Mereological Nihilism	Assignment	20
10/29/25	Handout & Grading Rubric for In-Class Essay #3: Yogācāra and the External World	Assignment	20
11/5/25	Handout & Grading Rubric for In-Class Essay #4: Buddhist Epistemology	Assignment	20

Due Date	Assignment Name	Assignment Type	Points
11/16/25	Quiz #6: Tibetan Experiences of Buddhism	Quiz	5
11/23/25	Quiz #7: Chinese Experiences of Buddhism	Quiz	5
11/23/25	GE Signature Assignment 2: Observation Report	Quiz	60
12/3/25	Handout & Grading Rubric for In-Class Essay #5: Buddhism and Abortion	Assignment	20
12/15/25	GE Reflection	Assignment	10

Coursework & Assignment Descriptions

10% - Attendance & Participation: Class participation is vital to your success in this class. Absences and tardiness must be kept to a minimum. Students will be afforded three free absences. If a student misses seven or more classes, they may receive a failing grade for the course. If tardiness becomes an issue one percentage point will be deducted for each transgression. Anyone who misses class is solely responsible for the materials and assignments missed.

20% - Quizzes: There are 8 Canvas quizzes based on the readings in this class. Each quiz is worth 2.5% of your grade. These quizzes consist of multiple-choice questions that test comprehension of the required readings. Each quiz only permits 1 attempt. Once you start the quiz, you have 25 minutes to complete it. There are five questions per quiz, each worth 1 point, for a total of 5 points. You're permitted to reference the course material while taking the quiz, though the time constraint means that you should familiarize yourself with the material before attempting the quiz. Once an answer is submitted, the question is

locked, and you cannot navigate back to it. You will be able to see the results of the quiz immediately. Correct answers will not be given if you miss a question. Note that if a question has as a possible answer "All of the options" and has another possible answer "None of the options," this is NOT a trick question. "All of the options" implies the exclusion of "None of the options."

50% - In-Class Essays: There are 5 in-class essays. Each is worth 10% of your grade. The essays should be between 350 and 500 words. No formal introduction is required. The essay should respond to the prompt completely and engage that week's primary texts (note: not videos, podcasts, etc.) by including at least two relevant quotations. All quotes must be in quotation marks and cited (author, page number). Be sure to define key terms and explain in your own words why the quotes are relevant to your essay. Note that plagiarism will be subject to the most severe penalties set out in the course syllabus and university policy.

20% - Signature Assignments: (1 Pre-Visit Analysis at 5%, 1 Observation Report at 10%, and 1 Reflective Essay at 5%)

The signature assignment in this class is specifically designed to demonstrate and apply the development of effective communication, the acquisition of substantive knowledge within the discipline of Buddhist studies, and the ability to think critically and creatively, which you have been refining in this class.

For this assignment, you will observe a Buddhist service or festival and create a pre-analysis of this Buddhist tradition, fill out an observation report, and write a reflective essay.

Project Description and Percentage Values

- **5% - Pre-Visit Analyses:** The first part of this assignment consists of a research paper. Before attending the Buddhist event, you will write a 3-page, double-spaced paper that provides an overview of the Buddhist philosophical/religious tradition you intend to visit. Your overview should apply an analytical lens to the tradition's primary texts and secondary literature, addressing the central doctrinal beliefs, ethical principles, rituals, ceremonies, architecture, symbols, art, as well as the key groups or institutions associated with the philosophical or religious tradition.

- **10% - Observation Report:** The second part of this assignment consists of an observation report. After the visit, you will complete a detailed observation report that describes the philosophical or religious event. This assignment will consist of answering eight questions. The first question asks you for the name of the event. The second asks you for the date of the event. The third asks you for the location of the event. The fourth has you describe the appearance of the event. The fifth has you describe the happenings of the event. The sixth has you describe the demographics of the event. The seventh has you describe the major beliefs/doctrines of the sect you visited, which must include three citations from the textbook (or another required reading from the course). The eighth part has you relate the appearance and happenings of the event to the major beliefs/doctrines of the sect you visited.
- **5% - Reflective Essay:** After completing the pre-analysis and observation report, you will write a reflective essay. The reflective writing should consist of at least 1 full page of writing (about 500 words) that addresses at least two of the following question-sets:
 1. Reflect on how you thought about Buddhism (specifically, the traditions you visited) before you took this course, and how learning about it through your visitation and other assignments, especially the essays, in the course affected your view. Have any of your assumptions or understandings changed? Why? Were any other course activities or readings influential in this process?
 2. How has what you've learned for this assignment improved you as a thinker concerning Buddhism (specifically, the religions you visited)? What brought about those improvements? Point to specific experiences before class and during, as well as to any particularly important readings, assignments, or discussions in this course.
 3. Reflect on the struggles and successes of learning about Buddhist concepts (specifically, the religions you visited). How did the signature assignments and/or other course elements help you finally be successful? Be specific.
 4. Make connections between the concepts involved in this assignment (i.e., the pre-visit analyses, observation reports, and post-visit analysis) and what you've learned in other courses at SLCC. Make specific references to how these concepts are used or could be used in the other courses. How did what you

learned in other courses enhance your understanding of these concepts in this course, and vice versa?

Grading Scale

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100 – 94 = A

93 – 90 = A-

89 – 87 = B+

86 – 84 = B

83 – 80 = B-

79 – 77 = C+

76 – 74 = C

73 – 70 = C-

69 – 67 = D+

66 – 64 = D

63 – 60 = D-

59 – 0 = E

Engagement Plan

Email Policy:

I will respond to emails within two business days. I do not return emails at night or on the weekends. For example, an email sent at 3:00 AM on Monday may not be returned until Wednesday afternoon. Your email should include a salutation (e.g., Hi Greg), a short

message using complete sentences, and a professional valediction (e.g., Sincerely, [Your Name]). Please do not email me about things that can be easily asked in class.

Grading Policy:

Canvas quizzes are automatically graded by Canvas. If you have questions about the grade you received on one of these assignments, please come talk with me either before or after class or during office hours. I will try to have the essays, pre-visit analysis, observation report, and reflective essay graded within a week of being submitted. Again, if you have any questions about the grade you received on these, talk with me before or after class or during office hours.

The best way to contact me is via the Canvas Inbox, as I will prioritize this email over other modes of communication.

General Education Information

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This course fulfills the above requirement for the General Education Program at Salt Lake Community College. It is designed not only to teach the information and skills required by the discipline, but also to develop vital workplace skills and to teach strategies and skills that can be used for life-long learning.

General Education courses teach basic skills as well as broaden a student's knowledge of a wide range of subjects. Education is much more than the acquisition of facts; it is being able to use information in meaningful ways in order to enrich one's life.

While the subject of each course is important and useful, we become truly educated through making connections of such varied information with the different methods of organizing human experience that are practiced by different disciplines. Therefore, this course, when combined with other General Education courses, will enable you to develop broader perspectives and deeper understandings of your community and the world, as well as challenge previously held assumptions about the world and its inhabitants.

How to Navigate to Canvas

This course uses the Canvas course management system. All students must use Canvas to retrieve course readings, access web pages, upload assignments, receive course announcements, and review the class section's syllabus.

Institutional Policies

As members of our academic community, we would like to invite you to review the Institutional Syllabus which covers important policies and procedures. This document contains important links for students on the code of student rights and responsibilities, academic integrity, and grading policies, Title IX and other important acknowledgements. By familiarizing yourself with this information, you can help us create a safe and respectful environment for everyone.

For more information, navigate to the Institutional Policies tab on the [Institutional Syllabus](#) page.

Additional Class Policies

Late Assignment Policy

All assignments are due on Canvas on the stated date and time. See the table below for the late policies for each type of class work.

NOTE: Students are responsible for knowing assignment due dates.

Assignment	Late Penalty	Max Late Days Allowed
Quizzes	No penalty, but must be submitted by the last day of the course.	No Max
Essays	Essays are done in class and cannot be submitted late, unless pre-approved	0 days
Pre-Visit Analysis	10% per day	5 days, after which no credit

		is given
Observation Report	10% per day	5 days, after which no credit is given
Reflective Writing	10% per day	5 days, after which no credit is given

Extra Credit

Students are expected to earn their grades with the assignments given. I generally do not give extra credit assignments. However, I sometimes offer extra credit summary/opinion papers when there are fitting public philosophy conferences or lectures, either on campus or in the community. If you discover an event that you think fits the course, let me know, and I will consider it.

Learning Support and Tutoring Services

We are pleased to offer a range of tutoring and learning support services to help you achieve your academic goals. Whether you need assistance with a specific subject or want to improve your study skills, you have many options for tutoring or other support.

To learn more about the services we offer and how to access them, visit the [Institutional Syllabus](#) page under the Tutoring and Learning Support tab. We encourage you to take advantage of these resources to help you succeed in your studies. If you have any questions or would like to schedule a tutoring session, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. We are here to support you in any way we can.

Course Content Advisory

Please be advised that this course may include discussions, readings, and other content that some students might find distressing or triggering. Specifically, the course may cover topics such as:

- Violence or traumatic events
- Sensitive social and political issues
- Discussions of mental health, including depression and anxiety
- Graphic or explicit descriptions and imagery

- Any other specific content relevant to the course

Our aim is to explore these topics thoughtfully and respectfully, understanding their importance in our field of study. However, we recognize that such material can be challenging. If you have concerns about your ability to engage with certain course materials due to past experiences or personal reasons, please feel free to discuss this with me privately. We can explore alternative ways for you to engage with the material while ensuring your educational experience is not compromised.

Your well-being is important, and support services are available through the college's counseling support services should you need them.

Academic Integrity

Academic Dishonesty & Plagiarism

Academic dishonesty is not tolerated at SLCC. Academic dishonesty refers to actions such as, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, having someone else do your work, copying someone else's work, etc., and includes all situations where students make use of the work of others and claim such work as their own even though some wording, method of citation, or arrangement of evidence, ideas, or arguments have been altered. Thus, it is expected that all assigned work for this course will be entirely original. In cases of academic dishonesty, the student involved will receive a grade of "0" on the assignment for a first offense. A second offense garners a grade of "E" for the course and will be reported to the Registrar and the Office of Student Services and will go on the student's permanent record.

Please familiarize yourself with the Student Code of Conduct. This document lists your rights, your full responsibilities, the penalties to be imposed if you do not follow them (especially regarding cheating and plagiarism), and the recourse you may have.

Before you are tempted to plagiarize – or if you are unsure if what you are thinking of doing falls under the definitions of academic dishonesty – please come and see me for guidance and clarification. There's a lot we can do to avoid what might become academic dishonesty before it becomes so.

Academic Dishonesty & AI (e.g., ChatGPT)

ChatGPT and other LLMs are artificial intelligence (AI) chatboxes that are used to write papers, essays, brief answers, etc. The use of any AI is strictly prohibited in this class. Every relevant assignment in this class will be run through the plagiarism detection software provided by SLCC with the ability to detect whether a text was generated using AI. Any assignment (e.g., quiz, essay, paper, etc.) that is flagged for using AI will receive a "0" for a first offense, and the student will be asked to meet with me. A second offense garners a grade of "E" for the course and will be reported to the Registrar and the Office of Student Services.

Advising and Counseling Support Services

At our institution, we are committed to supporting your academic and personal growth. That's why we offer a range of advising and counseling services to help you navigate the challenges of college life. To learn more about the resources available to you and how to access them, visit the [Institutional Syllabus](#) page under the Advising and Counseling Support Services tab. Our advising team and the support centers across campus are here to support you in achieving your goals and overcoming any obstacles you may face.

Student Academic Calendar

As students you should be aware of all important dates in the semester, such as the day that courses begin and end, as well as the drop date and the last day to withdraw. To learn more about those dates, navigate to the Student Academic Calendar below:

[SLCC Student Academic Calendar](#)

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